

Dance Index

DURANC'S HORNPIPE

NEW YORK. Published at O. TORP'S Music Magazine, 465 Broadway.

The musical score for "Duranc's Hornpipe" is presented in four systems, each consisting of a piano accompaniment. The music is written in 2/4 time with a key signature of one sharp (F#). The notation includes various musical symbols such as treble and bass clefs, time signatures, key signatures, and notes with stems. Fingerings are indicated by numbers 1 through 5. Some notes are marked with an 'X', likely indicating a specific fingering or articulation. The score is arranged in a standard piano format, with the right hand (treble clef) and left hand (bass clef) parts clearly delineated. The first system shows a lively melody in the right hand and a supporting bass line in the left. The second system continues the melody with some trills and grace notes. The third system features more complex rhythmic patterns in the right hand. The fourth system concludes the piece with a final cadence.



THE GRACES

THE
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AND
ART OF DANCING.

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Title page of THE BALL-ROOM BIJOU, one of the many books on social and theatrical dancing, written by Charles Durang, ca. 1855.

Dance Index

a new magazine devoted to dancing

Editors

BAIRD HASTINGS
LINCOLN KIRSTEIN
PAUL MAGRIEL

Comment

Lillian Moore, who has already contributed one sprightly and informative bit of dance genealogy to *Dance Index* in her article about the Petipa family in a recent issue, here follows her own precedent with the record of another dancing family, the Durangs. Curiously enough, the Petipas are far better known hereabouts than the Durangs, though they played a considerably less important part in the development of the dance arts in this country.

The Durangs, indeed, were concerned exclusively with America, and John, the founder of the dancing dynasty, was the first native American dancer to make a career for himself. Coming as it did at so early a stage in our national culture, it could scarcely have escaped being a contributory influence on the theatre and dance of the day, and accordingly in a measure of all the days that have followed. Durang, therefore, is not merely a quaint relic that Miss Moore has dug up out of the archives, but a real part of American dance background. Unfortunately, no pictures of him, or of his beautiful and romantic colleague, Mme. Gardie, seem to have survived, but Miss Moore has given him entity out of the records. That we have begun to be interested in such matters is perhaps as reliable evidence as we could ask for that at last we are waking up to the values of our own arts.

That the August issue of *Dance Index* is making so late an appearance is due to the fact that only now after some stubborn resistance have the editors been forced to admit to themselves that the project originally planned for this date had assumed such dimensions as to demand still further delay.

This project started simply enough as a plan to

reprint an essay or two on the dance by Carl Van Vechten. When Mr. Van Vechten's writings began to be reread, however, the problems of selection immediately became acute, for here was such a rich vein of that rarest of all things, absolutely first rate dance criticism, that no single issue could do it justice. It was then planned to broaden the selection and make a double issue of it, to be dated August-September, but even that would have meant omitting certain articles that no really conscientious editor could omit without a feeling of guilt and general unhappiness.

The upshot of the matter is that a triple number has finally been decided upon, and will accordingly make its appearance in October, dated September-October-November. While even this, of course, will not compass all Mr. Van Vechten's writings on the subject, it will contain at least a substantial fraction of them, including not only some of the essays that have appeared in various of his books, but also several of his reviews of dance performances written for the New York Times from 1910-1913 when he was a member of the music department of that paper. These latter have not before been reprinted. Mr. Van Vechten's extensive personal collection of photographs, many of them quite rare, will be called upon for illustrations.

This first collection of dance writings of a distinguished American writer who happens also to be a distinguished critic of dancing, is not only delightful and informative in itself but testifies again to the strength and creativeness that exist so impressively in America's dance background when once we begin to look into it.

Cover: Original music for John Durang's *Hornpipe* (Courtesy of the New York Public Library: Collection of Early American Music)

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John Durang

The First American Dancer

by LILLIAN MOORE

John Durang was the first native American to win widespread recognition as a dancer. It would be foolish to try to claim that he was a great artist, or that he made any distinctive individual contribution to the art of the dance. Evidently he had a certain amount of skill, a great deal of charm, and that indefinable something called "box-office appeal," or his popularity would never have been able to survive the fierce competition to which it was subjected. When his lack of training and education, and the inauspicious circumstances of his childhood are considered, it is amazing that he was able to hold his own among the well-schooled foreign artists who flooded the American stage in the latter part of the eighteenth century.

Durang must have been passionately fond of the theatre. He was active in almost every one of its branches. Although known chiefly as a dancer, at various times he was also an actor, a mime, a choreographer, a property man, a singer, a tight-rope performer and acrobat, a designer and scene-painter, a puppeteer, a circus clown, an author, and even a theatrical manager.

John Durang was the son of Jacob Durang, who was born in Strasbourg, Alsace-Lorraine. He served as a surgeon in the French army, under Louis XV, from 1755 to 1767. He married Mary Arten of Vizeburg, and they came to the United States in November, 1767, settling in York, Lancaster County, Pennsylvania. During the Revolutionary War Jacob Durang served in the York County Militia. He died in South Carolina, about

1804. Jacob was the father of seven children, of whom the eldest was John.

Little is known concerning John Durang's childhood. He was born in York (not in Lancaster, the place given by most theatrical histories) on January 6, 1768. Evidently the Durang family spoke French or German at home, for John's sister Caroline was seriously hampered, in her ambitions as an actress, by her inability to speak English. John himself had difficulties with the language, as we learn from a letter of his son Charles, which is now in the Harvard Theatre Collection. Writing in 1862 to Thompson Westcott, who was then engaged in the preparation of an extra-illustrated copy of Durang's "History of the Philadelphia Stage,"* he says:

That interior of Rickett's Circus is bound up in a MS. Book of my Father's so that it can't be taken out without tearing it apart. I'll send you the book — but I must promise it is kind of an old family secret affair — not for every eye. That is, there is nothing wrong or immoral in it that any man may be ashamed of. My father there indulges in some whims that may excite the risibilities of the indifferent peruser. It is written in half French-German and English. He never received an English education — save that he got in being engaged as a dancer and pantomimist about the Old American Company and other English companies, where he endeavored to gain a knowledge of our language to make himself useful in the drama. Therefore his orthography is very queer and incorrect.

* "History of the Philadelphia Stage, between the years of 1749 and 1855," by Charles Durang (partly compiled from the papers of his father, John Durang). Published in the Philadelphia Sunday Dispatch, beginning with the issue of May 7, 1854.

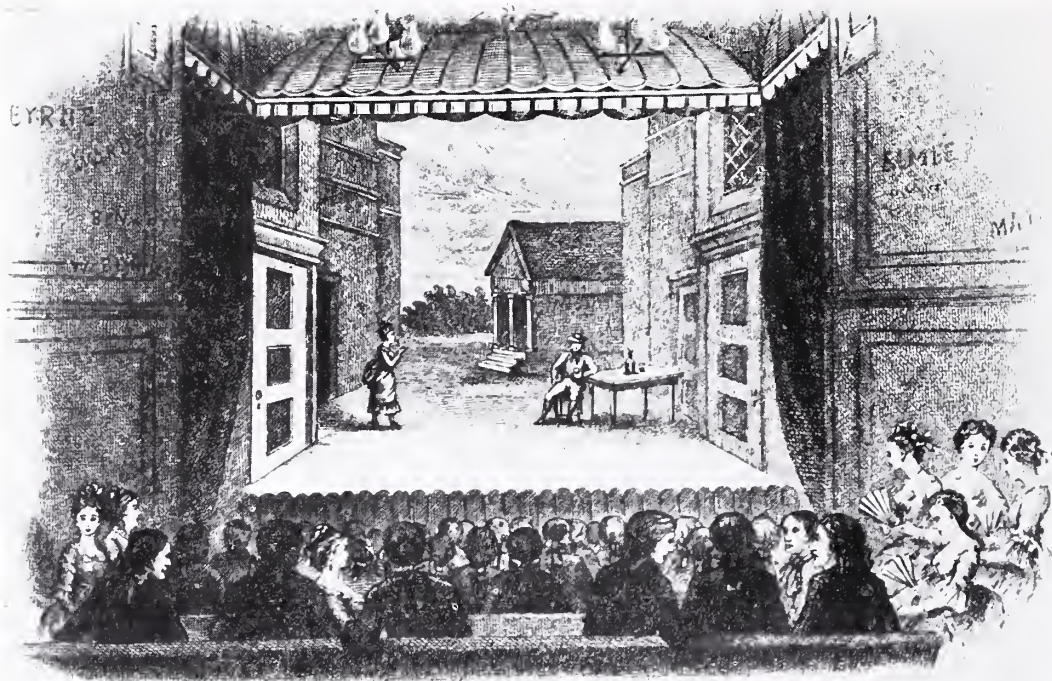
In about 1778 or 1779 (just after the terrible winter of Valley Forge, which is not very far from York) the Durang family moved to Philadelphia, where Jacob acquired property on Second Street. It is difficult to imagine how John Durang was able to obtain any kind of training for the theatre. Miss Ann Barzel's extensive researches into early dance teachers in America have revealed very few instructors in Philadelphia at that period. In 1774, before the Durangs came to the city, a certain Signor Tioli taught in Philadelphia, assisted by a Mr. Godwin. There was also a dancer named Pietro Sodi, who claimed to have been ballet master of the Italian Opera in London, who paused briefly in Philadelphia in June of the same year, was beneficiary at a concert, where he danced a rigadon, a minuet, and an allemande with "Miss Sodi," and then went on to greener fields in Charleston, South Carolina. The next teacher found in Philadelphia was a dancer and pantomimist named Roussel or Russel, who taught there in 1785, the year after John Durang's debut on the stage. Durang may possibly have had some training from him.

There was good reason for this scarcity of dance instruction. In October, 1774, the first Continental Congress passed a resolution which strongly recommended the closing of all public places of amusement. Not only theatres, but even public balls and dances were frowned upon. The British actors who had been giving performances in New York, Philadelphia, Baltimore and Annapolis before the Revolution hastened back to their homeland at the outbreak of hostilities. When the war was finally over, the first actor to come back to the newly-christened United States was Lewis Hallam, who arrived in Philadelphia in 1784.

Hallam had been the leading actor in the Colonies for fifteen years before the Revolution, and his father had been a distinguished actor and manager before him. In spite of his fame, Hallam found that it was absolutely impossible to obtain a license for the production of regular plays. The government was still strongly opposed to the theatre. Nevertheless, Hallam obtained the old Southwark

Theatre, gathered together a small company, and proceeded to give entertainments which he disguised as "Lectures." The members of this first troupe were Mr. and Mrs. Allen, British actors, Miss Caroline Durang, a singer, and John Durang, who was engaged to dance. The first "lecture" took place on December 7, 1784. It consisted of excerpts from Shakespeare, "A Monody to the memory of the Chiefs who have fallen in the cause of American Liberty, accompanied with vocal incantations, etc.," and a "Rondelay Celebrating the Independence of America, with Music, Scenery and other Decorations." At the next performance, on December 14, John Durang probably had his first real opportunity, for the program listed a "Peasant's Dance." These "lectures" continued intermittently throughout the winter. The shadow of the war still hovered over the country. Everywhere there was suffering and anarchy. The British players were actually persecuted, partly because of their nationality, partly because their profession was felt to be too frivolous for such distressful times. In the effort to curry favor, every theatre advertisement ended with the words *Vivat Respublica*, and patriotic spectacles were prominently featured.

During this first season John Durang was just seventeen years old. So far as we have been able to discover, he was without training. He made himself generally useful about the theatre, and probably helped to make the simple properties and settings, for he was clever at such things. A handsome young Frenchman, Charles Busselott, who had been an officer in the Guards of Louis XVI, joined the troupe at about this time. He was an expert swordsman and a clever mechanic. Assisted by Durang, he staged several effective shadow plays, one called *Les Grandes Ombres Chinoises*, and a later sequel, *Les Petites Ombres Italiennes*. Durang, meanwhile, danced between recitations, scenes, or spectacles. He danced, in fact, whenever he could get the stage. One of his contributions was a comedy number called *La Fricasee*. His favorite, then and throughout his career, was the Hornpipe. His son, Charles Durang, admits that much of John's early success was



Interior of the JOHN ST. THEATRE.

The J. Clarence Davies Collection, Museum of the City of New York.

due to his nationality. He was the only American-born member of the company, and, "being a native citizen, was always received with applause," as Charles says.

In the summer of 1785 the little company, now somewhat enlarged under the joint management of Hallam and Allen, decided to try its luck in New York. No sooner had they left Philadelphia than the Pennsylvania Legislature began a heated debate on the subject of the theatre. A bill for the suppression of vice and immorality was then before the house, and a clause absolutely forbidding all theatrical performances had been suggested. During the debates Robert Morris spoke in favor of the theatre, while General Anthony Wayne even advanced the modern idea that it could be made an effective instrument of government propaganda! The objectionable clause was finally rejected, but a

little later, on September 25, 1786, a law was actually passed forbidding all theatrical performances in Philadelphia.

In New York the players met with a reception that was definitely hostile. During the occupation of the city by the British, the John St. Theatre had been used for amateur plays presented by the officers of the enemy garrison, and consequently had acquired a bad name with the loyal New Yorkers. Nevertheless, the actors braved public opinion and opened on August 11, 1785, with another "lecture," consisting of the usual Shakespearean excerpts and a patriotic "Monody," while Durang danced a Hornpipe and an "Alamande." It is to be feared that his execution of the last dance was then as awkward as his spelling of it. On August 20, the company came forward more boldly, announcing a lecture with "a variety of entertaining *Characters*, a *caricature* introduction," and,

inevitably, a Hornpipe. The bill concluded with a full-length pantomime, "*The Genii of the Rock, with Music, Scenery, Machinery and Decorations incidental to the performance.*" On August 26 we meet, for the first time, the name of Bentley, who had "selected and composed" new music for *The Cave of Enchantment, or The Stockwell Wonder*.

John Bentley was a young English harpsichordist who, in 1783, had founded the "City Concerts," given every two weeks by the finest musicians of Philadelphia. He joined Hallam's company in the spring of 1785, and came with it to New York. He played the harpsichord in the pit, or led the orchestra if there was one, composed incidental music when it was needed, and acted "bit" parts on nights when pure drama was presented.

The Old American Company, as it was now called, frankly announced, for September 1, its first harlequinade, *The Touchstone, or Harlequin Traveller*. This was patterned after Dibdin's pantomime, but Bentley composed new music for the American premiere. This production utilized the full strength of the little company, which numbered eight people: Hallam was Harlequin, Durang was Scaramouche, Miss Durang was Columbine, Allen was Pierrot, and other stock roles of the Italian-English pantomime were played by Mr. Moore, Mr. Lake, and Mrs. Allen, with Bentley, of course, at the harpsichord.

The harlequinade had been a favorite form of entertainment in England since 1717, when the celebrated mime and manager John Rich began his long series of successful comedy pantomimes. The standard characters, Harlequin, Columbine, Pierrot, Scaramouche, etc., were drawn from the old Italian comedy, and appeared again and again in different situations. A modern parallel is found in the Disney cartoons, where we meet the familiar favorites, Mickey and Minnie Mouse, in all sorts of varied settings and situations. Lewis Hallam was an expert Harlequin. Charles Durang, writing in 1854, says of him:

As a pantomimist, Hallam was *au fait*. He displayed much activity and grace as a ground harlequin. The modes of then executing that agile parti-colored cavalier's movements are

now entirely obsolete and unpracticed by the modern representatives of his antics. The style of the *mime* has changed as well as that of the actor . . . and of the ballet dancer. . .

Later in his career, John Durang often assumed the hero's role of Harlequin. To give an idea of the scope and variety of this particular type of pantomime, here are a few of the harlequinades in which John Durang appeared: *The Birth of Harlequin, Harlequin Neptune, The Sorcerer's Apprentice, or Harlequin Wood-Cutter, Harlequin Pastry-cook, Harlequin Balloonist, Harlequin Everywhere, The Death and Renovation of Harlequin, Harlequin Mariner, Harlequin in Philadelphia, Harlequin's Revenge*. Some of these pieces were adaptations of pantomimes which had been successfully presented in England, while others like, obviously, *Harlequin in Philadelphia*, were newly invented for special occasions. Sometimes Harlequin would be introduced in a plot built around a topic of current interest.

The first New York season of the Old American Company met with considerable opposition. Several letters were written to the papers, protesting against the opening of the theatre while the city was still in ruins, and there was need for the greatest industry and economy. A letter signed "Old Citizen," which appeared in the New York Packet for September 17, 1785, said that if the theatre were opened "let it not be with Harlequin farces, by a set who, one or two excepted, are *British strangers*. . ." Hallam and Allen, endeavoring to placate the press and the authorities, offered a gift of \$100 to the Alms House of New York City, but the Commissioners refused it on moral grounds, saying that the playhouse had been opened "without license or permission of the civil authorities." Fifty years later Fanny Elssler was to meet with similar opposition in Boston, where her gift of \$1000 was almost refused on the grounds that she was "a foreign operadancer."

John Durang, the native citizen, was of course the only one to benefit by the storm. He continued to dance the Hornpipe almost nightly, to enthusiastic and patriotic applause.

Undaunted by criticism, Hallam announced for September 20 something closely resembling a real ballet:

"A superb Pantomimical Fete, in which the powers of *Music*, *Machinery*, and *Painting* are combined to cause the most pleasing effects. The *Fete* consists of the most favorite scenes, selected from the Pantomimes already exhibited, so connected as to form a regular Plot in DUMB SHEW. In which will be introduced, the Scene of the Vaux-Hall, with the song of Ted Blarney, and a comic dance called *La Fricasee*. The whole to conclude with the celebrated Skeleton Scene."

Durang's next contribution was "a grotesque Necromantic Dance," introduced into the pantomime *The Witches, or Harlequin in the Moon*, on September 22.

The season continued until November 3, with a different production almost every night. In the plays, Durang sustained insignificant roles: one of four sailors in *Thomas and Sally*, a servant in *The Taming of the Shrew*, and so forth. On October 14 a certain M. Bellair made his debut in a "French dance." Could this stranger have been an exponent of the classic ballet? At any rate, he was not a success, for he appeared no more, and Durang's Hornpipe was not contested again that year.

Charles Durang tells us how, during that very first season in New York, his father made the acquaintance of a German dwarf named Hoffmaster. This little fellow, only three feet tall, was a talented musician and a prominent and popular figure in New York's artistic circles. He composed for the American dancer a melody which became famous as *Durang's Hornpipe*. This tune has survived in an edition published nearly half a century later, in 1834, by Otto Torp of New York. Thanks to Charles Durang, we have not only the music, but a step-by-step description of his father's dance. He published it about 1855, in one of his numerous little pocket-guides to social and theatrical dancing.* The fancy title, *Pas de Matelot*, is at first misleading, and we suspect that this is something Charles Durang copied from the numerous

French ballet dancers with whom he was associated later in his career, but the second line, "A Sailor Hornpipe — *Old Style*" is a dead give-away. Surely this is John Durang's original Hornpipe! Charles had a strong love of the past, revealed in the many nostalgic little phrases which have crept into his writings, and naturally he would have wished to preserve his father's most famous dance.

Pas de Matelot

A Sailor Hornpipe — Old Style

1. Glissade round (first part of tune).
2. Double shuffle down, do.
3. Heel and toe back, finish with back shuffle.
4. Cut the buckle down, finish the shuffle.
5. Side shuffle right and left, finishing with beats.
6. Pigeon wing going round.
7. Heel and toe haul in back.
8. Steady toes down.
9. Changes back, finish with back shuffle and beats.
10. Wave step down.
11. Heel and toe shuffle obliquely back.
12. Whirligig, with beats down.
13. Sissone and entrechats back.
14. Running forward on the heels.
15. Double Scotch step, with a heel Brand in Place. (sic)
16. Single Scotch step back.
17. Parried toes round, or feet *in* and *out*.
18. The Cooper shuffle right and left back.
19. Grasshopper step down.
20. *Terré-à-terré* (sic) or beating on toes back.
21. Jockey crotch down.
22. Traverse round, with hornpipe glissade.

Bow and finish.

Each step takes up one strain of the tune. There are a variety of other shuffles, but the above are the principal, with their original names."

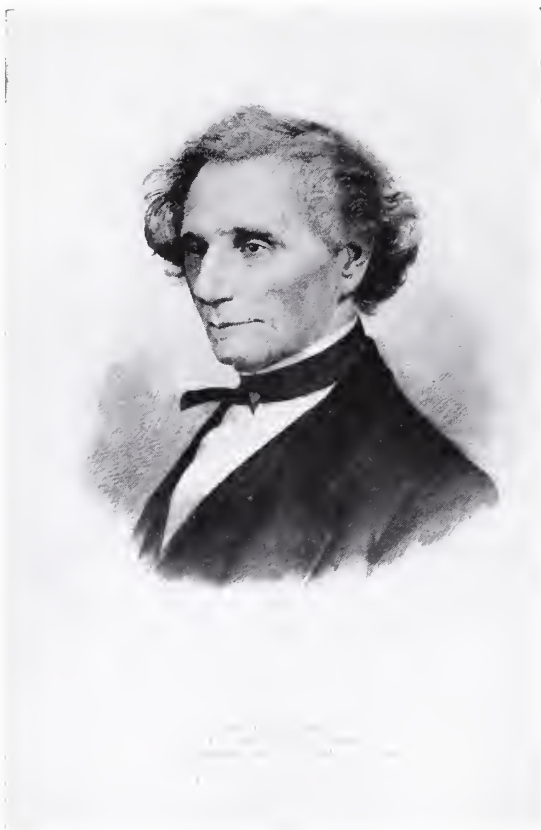
A good dancer with imagination could easily reconstruct much of John Durang's hornpipe from this simple description, for many of these phrases are still familiar or recognizable: the *double shuffle*, the *pigeon wing*, and the *heel and toe haul*, for example. The hornpipe is, of course, an acknowledged ancestor of the modern tap dance. The directness of the descent is quite evident here, and

* "The Ball-Room Bijou, and Art of Dancing," by Charles Durang.

one unfamiliar step, the *Whirligig*, with beats down, is vividly suggestive of a certain swift tapping turn, executed with arms extended and a renversé movement of the head and shoulders, which was presumably invented by Miss Eleanor Powell. Unfortunately the names of many of Durang's steps are meaningless today. We are at a loss to explain the *Double Scotch step* (it sounds a bit intemperate!), *Parried toes round*, the *Cooper shuffle* or the provocative *Grasshopper step*. Could this be an early American relative of the Russian peasant steps executed in a deep *plié*?

After their first season in New York, John Durang and his sister withdrew from the Old American Company and returned to Philadelphia, where they embarked on an interesting little venture of their own. Joining forces with Charles Busselott, they evaded the strict anti-theatre laws by presenting a series of puppet-plays in a third-story room of the house in Second Street. John Durang made the puppets, Busselott prepared the scenic effects, and the dialogue and songs were delivered by Mr. and Mrs. Allen, and Caroline Durang. The first Philadelphia performance of George Washington's favorite ballet-opera, *The Poor Soldier*, was made through the medium of these puppets. The improvised theatre was crowded every night, at 50¢ a ticket. It was impossible, of course, for John Durang to resist for long the temptation to break into the hornpipe; soon it appeared on the bills, along with the *Fricasee* and other old favorites. At about this time Caroline Durang married Charles Busselott, and retired from the stage.

By June 1788, the Old American Company dared to appear again at the Southwark Theatre in Philadelphia. The one new production in the repertoire was a patriotic one, *The Fourth of July, or the Sailor's Festival*, which must have offered a neat opportunity for Durang. There was still active opposition to the theatre, and a petition signed by the Quakers was presented to the Philadelphia Assembly on July 18, protesting against those "schools of seduction" and "resorts of the licentious," the playhouses. A week later the



Harvard Theatre Collection.

company decided that discretion was the better part of valor, and moved on to finish the summer in Baltimore. They opened again in Philadelphia in January, 1789. The poor players must have breathed a sigh of relief when the anti-theatre law of 1786 was finally repealed on March 2, 1789, and they could announce their performances legally, *By Authority*. Mr. Hallam celebrated the occasion by presenting, in the fifth act of *The Roman Father*, "AN OVATION for Publius's Victory over the Curatii"; Mr. Durang celebrated by dancing — a Hornpipe!

On March 20, the company presented Robert Brinsley Sheridan's pantomime of *Robinson Crusoe, or Harlequin Friday*. This popular piece had been in the repertoire for



The old South Street Theatre.

The SOUTHWARK THEATRE, Philadelphia.

From a drawing by Edwin Forrest Durang, grandson of John Durang.
University of Pennsylvania Library.

two years, but this was John Durang's first appearance as Friday. As Lincoln Kirstein has pointed out, this "blackface clown in coffee-colored fleshings" was a direct ancestor of the negro impersonators who, typified by "Jim Crow" Rice, were so popular during the nineteenth century.*

For the next seven years Durang remained with the Old American Company almost continuously, alternating between the John St. Theatre, New York, and the Southwark, Philadelphia, with occasional brief excursions to Baltimore, Harrisburg, Hartford, Lancaster, Newport and other towns.

During the season of George Washington's inauguration as first President of the United

States, the company was in New York, which was then the capital. Washington attended the theatre frequently, and must have seen John Durang dance many times. Later the capital was transferred to Philadelphia, and Washington continued his attendance at the Southwark Theatre. Charles Durang describes one of these festive occasions, as his father had related it to him:

Washington's reception at the theatre was always exceedingly formal and ceremonious. A soldier was generally posted at each stage-door, four soldiers were placed in the gallery; a military guard attended. Mr. Wignell, in a full dress of black, with his hair elaborately powdered in the fashion of the day and holding two wax candles in silver candlesticks, was accustomed to receive the President at the box-door and conduct Washington and his party to their seats.

* "The Book of the Dance," by Lincoln Kirstein, p. 342.

The old Southwark (or South St.) Theatre deserves more than passing mention, since it was the scene of so many of the triumphs of John Durang and, later, of his entire family. Its appearance has been preserved for us in a water-color drawing made by Edwin F. Durang, the son of Charles and grandson of John Durang. The Southwark Theatre was opened on November 21, 1766. It had two tiers of boxes, and a gallery on the same level with the upper boxes. The corridors were extremely narrow, and papered; the outside was painted red. The stage was large and well equipped; it was, in fact, the best part of the house. The lighting was provided by oil lamps without glasses. In May, 1821, it was almost entirely destroyed by fire, with all its valuable stock of scenery, costumes and music. Another building, raised on the old foundations with parts of the original walls, was used as a grain distillery until it was finally torn down in 1912.

In Philadelphia, on November 7, 1790, Durang introduced a new variation of an old favorite, when it was announced that he would dance "a Hornpipe on 13 eggs, Blindfolded, without breaking one." A few days later, on November 11, he made his first appearance as the hero of an extremely popular "Pantomimic Dance," *The Wapping Landlady*, which was also known as *The Sailor's Landlady*, *Jack in Distress*, and *Poor Jack*. This concoction was to be given over and over again, in every city in the country, before the close of the century. It was a particular favorite, naturally, with John Durang.

About 1787, Durang had married a dancer named Mary McEwen. She made her debut at the Southwark Theatre on March 11, 1789, as Mrs. Gazette in *The True-Born Irishman*. Probably she was already a mother, for her eldest son made his debut two years later. Her career was frequently interrupted, for she had at least seven children, but she continued to appear intermittently, as a dancer and actress of small roles, until her death in 1812, at the age of 43.

On July 7, 1791, at the Southwark Theatre, a "Master Durang" made his first appearance as Harlequin Pigmy in *The Birth of Harlequin*. His father was Harlequin, his mother Columbine. The identity of this particular youngster is somewhat confused. Miss Barzel calls him "Frederick," a name which does not occur in the later annals of the Durang clan. Possibly the little fellow died in childhood. He was certainly not Charles, Ferdinand, or Augustus, the three best-known Durangs, for they were not born until 1794, 1796 and 1800, respectively.

John Durang had been on the stage for seven years before he came into close contact with well-trained European dancers of established reputation. Later he was to appear under the four best choreographers of eighteenth-century America: Alexander Placide, M. Francisquy, James Byrne and William Francis. Until 1792, however, he had gone blithely along, apparently content with his Hornpipes and *Fricasees*. Now he met with real competition, and, alas, was forced to bow before it.

Since the end of the war and the repeal of the anti-theatre laws, foreign artists had been gradually drifting back to the United States. In 1790 a M. Duport who claimed to be a pupil of the great Gardel appeared at a concert in Philadelphia. He later opened a school in New York. A M. Du Moulin, with a small company of French dancers, appeared in Philadelphia in 1791-2, while Durang was in New York. A few years later Durang and Du Moulin were to be members of the same company. In 1790, while Durang was in Philadelphia, a M. and Mme. St. Aivre danced minuets, gavottes, and allemandes at the John St. Theatre in New York.

On January 25, 1792, Alexander Placide and his wife made their New York debuts in the "Dancing Ballot" (sic) *The Bird Catcher*. Placide danced the title role, Mme. Placide was Rosetta, and poor Durang was relegated to the ensemble of Hunters. The ballet featured a Minuet de la Cour and a Gavotte, danced by the new stars. The Placides were trained in the classic ballet, acrobatics, tumbl-

ing, and dancing on the tight-rope. They had been appearing for a year in Charleston, S.C., with their own company. On the day of their debut, Hallam and Henry (the managers of the Old American Company) announced that they had sent to Charleston for the rest of the Placide troupe, and were confident that "the united exertions in agility and pantomime of these much applauded strangers . . . will prove acceptable." M. Placide also danced the Hornpipe, but on a rope, suspended high in the air! In New York he produced two more "Dancing Ballets": *The Return of the Labourers*, which included a "Sabottiere Dance," and *The Two Philosophers, or the Merry Girl*, which won enduring popularity, and was later revived in Philadelphia at the special request of President Washington. During the engagement of the Placides Durang modestly retired to insignificant roles, and even his famous Hornpipe was conspicuously absent from the bills. On only one occasion did he play Harlequin to the Columbine of Mme. Placide: on April 27, 1792, when *The Birth of Harlequin* was produced, with the little Master Durang probably cast again in his role of Pigmy.

The Placides remained with the Old American Company during the summer season in Philadelphia, where they produced four new pantomimes, *The Old Soldier*, *The Enchanted Nosegay*, *Columbine Invisible*, and *Harlequin Balloonist*, and repeated the successful "Dancing Ballets," which were probably closer to our present-day conception of a ballet than anything which had been seen in the United States up to that time.

After this Philadelphia engagement the Placides continued South to their old post at Charleston, where Alexander eventually became manager of the theatre and a person of considerable importance.

During his brief association with the accomplished Placides, Durang had not been wasting his time. He, too, was learning to dance on the tight-rope and slack wire, an accomplishment which he did not perfect for two more years, but which was to serve him well in his later circus days.

This glimpse of French artistry had made New York audiences dissatisfied with raw native talent, and in the N.Y. Journal for February 13, 1793, a disgruntled "Amateur" complained that "We cannot conclude without . . . expressing our doubts, whether the managers suppose we can be amused by the agility of Mr. Durang, or whether we should be diverted with him as the character of a clumsy stage dancer!"*

In 1794 Durang participated in an event of great interest in musical history: the premiere of *Tammany*, one of the first operas written in America, with an American subject. The artistic merits of this much-discussed work are somewhat doubtful, as it seems to have been the center of a violent political storm. The Republicans praised it extravagantly, while the Federalists condemned it just as strongly. William Dunlap called it "a melange of bombast . . . seasoned high with spices hot from Paris, and swelling with rhodomontade for the sonorous voice of Hodgkinson," and although he admitted that it was "received with unbounded applause" he laid this to the fact that the audience consisted of "the poorer class of mechanics and clerks."

The libretto of *Tammany* was written by Mrs. Anne Julia Hatton, a sister of the great actress Mrs. Siddons. She had interested the Tammany Society in her opera, and it was produced partly under its auspices. The story concerned the struggle between the Indian hero, Tammany, and the Spanish adventurers, led by Columbus. The libretto has not survived and its details are obscure.

The music was composed by James Hewitt, a fine violinist who had been for two years the leader of the orchestra of the John St. Theatre. Born in England in 1770, he was only twenty-four years old when he wrote *Tammany*. Later he became a music publisher, and his imprints are now collectors' items. Unfortunately he received little credit for his creative work, and the first-night audience, dissatisfied with the new music of

* Quoted by George C. Odell: "The History of the New York State," Vol. I, p. 319.

Tammany, demanded a popular tune instead. When Hewitt refused to comply with their wishes he was violently hissed!

The scenery was painted by Charles Ciceri. This name will be extremely familiar to students of the romantic ballet, for Pierre Luc Charles Ciceri designed the original settings for Taglioni's *La Sylphide*, *Nathalie*, and *La Fille du Danube*, as well as for the first production of *Giselle*. It would be interesting to trace the exact relationship between the two Ciceris. Pierre, born at St. Cloud in 1782, may have been Charles's nephew or cousin.

The life of Charles Ciceri reads like an adventure story. He was born in Milan, spent his youth with an uncle in France, ran away several times, and finally served for five years as a mercenary soldier in Santo Domingo. There he occupied his spare time in painting scenery for the local theatre. He returned to Europe and worked briefly in the theatres of Paris, Bordeaux, and London. On his way back to Santo Domingo he was shipwrecked on the Bahamas, and eventually found his way to the United States. Engaged as scene painter for the New Theatre in Philadelphia, which was supposed to open in 1793, he was driven from the city by a terrible epidemic of yellow fever which broke out that summer. He came to New York and obtained a position at the John St. Theatre. Dunlap says of him: "His architectural scenery was always good. He was long a most valuable auxiliary to the corps dramatique. . . ." His scenes for *Tammany* were "gaudy and unnatural, but had a brilliancy of coloring, reds and yellows being very abundant." Charles Durang also had a good word to say for Ciceri, calling him "a very ingenious artist, in various ways." Ciceri remained in the United States until 1798, when he returned to France.

John Durang's part in *Tammany* consisted of an Indian Dance, in which he shared the honors with a Mr. Miller (probably a rope-dancer and gymnast who had been appearing at Vauxhall). It is interesting that the first opera-ballet given in this country should have been an American Indian dance!

The first performance of *Tammany, or the Indian Chief* took place on March 3, 1794. It was given four times that season in New York (quite a record, in those days when most productions were given only once or twice) and later revived. The New York Daily Advertiser (an anti-Federalist paper, it must be admitted) said on March 6, 1794: "The language of the piece is sublimely beautiful, nervous and pathetic; its sentiments such as must be approved by every wise and virtuous person. . . The whole of it is replete with beauty, and discovers a genius of the first order; and the managers have got it up in a manner which proves that they were sensible of its worth, and the advantage they would reap from it."

Another letter, signed "A Calm Observer," said in the Daily Advertiser of March 7: "There was a great deal of liberty and equality in it — *Tammany* received much applause for his noble and independent spirit. . . The Prologue and Epilogue were brim full of the present popular notions of liberty, and of course went down with great eclat. To be serious, however, *Tammany* has some merit, and was tolerably supported by most of the performers, and with good music and scenery." There seems to be no mention of the Indian dances in any of these contemporary letters, but another correspondent in the same paper praises the whole scenic production: "Much credit is due to Messrs. Hallam and Henry for the pains they have taken in decorations, scenery, etc., and I doubt not A Citizen will hear whenever *Tammany* is performed, the warm, the juvenile exclamation, Oh! What a beautiful sight!"*

Durang took advantage of the popular pre-occupation with *Tammany*, and at his benefit performance on June 11 presented a new pantomime ballet called *The Huntress, or Tammany's Frolics*. Durang may have staged this composition. If so, it was one of his first attempts at choreography. At the same performance he surprised his old friends by dancing for the first time on the slack wire. A year earlier, Durang had collaborated with

* Quoted by Odell: op. cit., pp. 347-8.

Bissett in the preparation of a comic pantomime, *The Grateful Lion, or the Lilliputian's Power*, which was given at the John St. Theatre at their benefit performance on June 7, 1793. Perhaps the Lilliputian was Master Frederick (?) Durang.

Soon after *Tammany* was produced in New York, an event of the greatest importance in the history of the ballet in America took place in Philadelphia. This was the premiere of the ballet pantomime *La Forêt Noire*, which was the first *serious* ballet to be given in this country. Of almost equal importance was the American debut, on the same evening, of the exquisite Madame Gardie, the first ballerina to win renown here as both dancer and mime. Contemporary accounts agree unanimously that she was an artist of exceptional ability and charm. Her influence on John Durang was a profound and lasting one. The pathetic story of her brief life is one of the real tragedies of the theatre.

Madame Gardie was born in Santo Domingo, and when a very young girl made her debut at the theatre in Cape François. There she contracted a union with a man named Maurison, by whom she had a son. They separated, and he went to France. In the meantime a dissipated young French nobleman, named Gardie, arrived in Santo Domingo. He fell in love with the beautiful dancer, married her, and took her back to France. His aristocratic family refused to receive her, and she proudly returned to her profession. One evening a Parisian audience demanded that she sing the Marseillaise, and she refused (whether from Royalist sympathies, or just a dancer's typical inability to sing, is not known!). A furious mob drove her from the theatre, and she had to leave the country. Her husband accompanied her to Santo Domingo. There they were forced to flee once more because of the terrible race riots which had broken out. They finally found their way to Philadelphia, where Wignell and Reinagle engaged Madame Gardie for a series of appearances at their New Theatre on Chestnut St. Her husband found occasional employment as a music

copyist, but his inability to support his wife preyed on his mind, and he became more and more despondent and melancholy. Madame Gardie appeared with several companies (including, notably, the Old American) with extraordinary success, but salaries were small, and, in 1798, she found herself without an engagement. The situation of the little family became desperate. Gardie finally agreed to return alone to his family in France (she refused to go to them) while she made arrangements to take her little son, then about seven years old, to Santo Domingo. On the eve of his departure, Gardie, unable to bear the thought of separation from his beautiful wife, crept into the room where she slept with the boy, stabbed her to death, and then killed himself. The tragedy took place early in August, 1798, in a third-story room of a house at the corner of Broad and Pearl Streets, in New York City. In the same house George Washington had bade farewell to his officers at the close of the American Revolution.

In 1794, however, Madame Gardie was young and lovely and full of hopeful ambition. The New Chestnut St. Theatre was the best-equipped playhouse in America, with a fine orchestra of twenty musicians, and a ballet company under the direction of William Francis, who was later to be closely associated with John Durang. *La Forêt Noire*, the vehicle chosen for her debut, was prepared with the greatest care. It was based on a French pantomime, in which Madame Gardie had probably appeared during her stay in Paris. New music was composed for the occasion by Alexander Reinagle, the distinguished conductor of the Philadelphia "City Concerts," and director of the orchestra at the Chestnut St. Theatre. This fine musician, born in England of Austrian parents, was an intimate friend of Philip Emmanuel Bach. He had travelled widely and acquired some European reputation before he came to the United States in 1786. The examples of his music which have survived are very much in the style of Bach.

It has been impossible to discover exactly who was responsible for the original chore-

ography of *La Forêt Noire*. It may have been the French dancer Quesnet (Quesnay, or Quenet) who made his debut at the Chestnut a month later, and joined the Old American Company with Madame Gardie in the following autumn. William Francis, staff ballet master, probably assisted. Madame Gardie herself may have had a good deal to do with the staging. A libretto of *La Forêt Noire*, published in Boston when it was presented there in 1795, has survived, and a copy is to be found in the library of the University of Pennsylvania. The authorship of this delightful little booklet is attributed in the University catalogue to Madame Gardie, although her name occurs only as Lucille, the heroine, in the listing of all the members of the Boston cast. The twelve-page libretto is written so vividly that one can almost see the charming old-fashioned pantomime. A bit of action by a comedy character, Lucille's despised suitor, reminds one of the similar character in Dauberval's *La Fille Mal Gardée*: "The Abbe falls over a chair and table and pulls them on him, after a while rises, sees the letter, goes to the portrait (of Lauridan, to whom Lucille is secretly married) sees who it is, weeps ridiculously, takes a light and examines the portrait, and at last concluding that it is not so handsome as himself, goes out admiring his person." In another scene a thrilling bit of melodrama is described:

She traverses the stage, shewing much fatigue; sees a grotto, is desirous of entering for repose; as she is going in, a Robber comes out and seizes her by the Arm; she struggles, escapes, and flies to the opposite side; a second Robber stops her; . . . she struggles, her strength fails, and she falls fainting into their arms. They whistle; the Captain enters with the child and all the Robbers. The child knows his mother, and wishes to go to her; the Captain stops him, makes one of the men hold him, and taking Lucille from the Robber, strives to recover her. She recovers by degrees, and screams at seeing herself in the arms of the Captain; throws herself on her knees. He lifts her up, and tells her that if she will embrace him, she shall have her child. She repulses him with contempt. He persists. She perceives a poignard in his girdle, feigns consent, approaches him, snatches the poignard, retires and then advances rapidly to strike him. The Robbers who hold the child, draw their

sabres upon him; she seeing it, shrieks and drops the poignard. The Captain looks at her laughing—she seeing that she can obtain nothing by these means, falls on her knees and demands her child, with softness. The Captain appears to speak to the Robbers. Lucille thinking that she is unseen, endeavors to escape with her child. The Robbers perceive the flight, follow and bring them back. . .

The advertisements of the first production of *La Forêt Noire* note: "Books, descriptive of the Pantomime, to be had at the Theatre." Perhaps a copy of this original Philadelphia edition has survived, too. It must surely be one of the first ballet librettos published in this country.

La Forêt Noire was a tremendous success, and was given six times during that season. It remained in the repertoire for many years. Its popularity was due largely to the lovely Madame Gardie, of whom Charles Durang writes:

Madame Gardie created quite a sensation with her pantomimic acting. Her face, figure and action were truly beautiful and enchanting, and the town were in extacies (sic) with her and with this species of performances. Madame Gardie's character inspired as much respect in her private life as her short professional career had excited the admiration of the public. With splendid talents, she combined all the vivacious fascinations of her gay and polite nation. Perhaps she never had her equal in these accomplishments on our stage. This we have had from one who performed with her in the pantomimes, and who personally esteemed her. . .

This was, of course, his father, John Durang, who met Madame Gardie in the following autumn when she joined the Old American Company during its Philadelphia season. M. Quesnet came with her, and for a time Durang again retired to small roles. Several elaborate new ballets were produced at the old Southwark Theatre that year. *The Danaïdes*, with choreography by Quesnet, was presented on October 8, and repeated twice within a week. This ballet was probably adapted from Salieri's opera, given at the Paris Opera in 1784. Cicci designed the scenery, and the music was composed by Victor Pelissier, a French horn player who, like Madame Gardie, had fled from the race riots in Santo Domingo. He was a member of

the orchestra at the John St. Theatre, New York, and later went to the Chestnut. Before the turn of the century he had composed incidental music for eighteen plays, farces, harlequinades and ballets.

On November 1, another ballet-pantomime, *Sophia of Brabant, or the False Friend*, was presented. The music was again by Pelissier. Charles Durang says that this pantomime had enjoyed a run of 100 nights in London. In his "History of the American Theatre" William Dunlap, completely ignoring *La Forêt Noire*, claims that *Sophia of Brabant* was the first serious ballet given in this country. He was probably confused by the fact that in New York City it did precede *La Forêt Noire*.

The Philadelphia season of 1794 closed on December 4, the very day that Charles Durang was born, and the company proceeded at once to New York, where they opened on the 15th. *Sophia of Brabant* was presented on December 29. Madame Gardie completely captivated New York. Her beauty, grace and charm were extravagantly praised by the press and the public. "The appearance and manner of this lady," wrote one New York critic, "are prepossessing beyond any example on our stage."

During this season *Tammany* was revived, as well as *The Wapping Landlady* (masquerading under the new title of *Poor Jack*). Here Durang had the leading role and a good chance to dance the Hornpipe again. *La Forêt Noire* had its New York premiere on March 20, 1795, and was another triumph for Madame Gardie.

That summer the company went to Hartford, where the ballets presented were *La Forêt Noire*, *Sophia of Brabant*, and a revival of Placide's *The Bird Catcher*.

On October 21, 1795, the Old American Company began its first engagement in Boston. In the plays John Durang had very small parts, but in almost every ballet he danced opposite Madame Gardie. Among those produced were *La Forêt Noire*, *The Sailor's Landlady*, *The Bird Catcher*, and William

Francis's "Scots Pastoral Dance," *The Caledonian Frolic*. Francis was not a member of the company, and it is possible that Madame Gardie may have supervised the staging of his ballet. She had been at the Chestnut St. Theatre when he produced it there in the previous year. In addition to the ballets and plays, Durang appeared in such divertissements as a grotesque "Dwarf Dance," a classic Allemande danced with Madame Gardie, and the inevitable Hornpipe. During this Boston season Joseph Jefferson, grandfather of the actor of "Rip Van Winkle" fame, made his American debut at the age of 22. He and John Durang formed a friendship which lasted for the rest of their lives.

Returning to New York, the Old American Company opened at the John St. Theatre on February 10, 1796. In this same month a choreographer of great talent and originality arrived in New York. M. Francisquy had been for nearly two years a member of Placide's troupe in Charleston, South Carolina. In that city he was often billed as "Francisque," a name which, if we are not mistaken, occurs in the roster of the Paris Opera Ballet in the latter half of the eighteenth century. Probably discouraged by the consistent mispronunciation of the Colonials, the dancer changed the spelling to Francisquy. Gathering together a small group of French dancers, in the autumn of 1795, Francisquy proceeded by easy stages, pausing to give performances in Richmond and other cities, to New York. The little company, which included M. and Mme. Val and M. Dubois, was engaged to give special performances with the Old American Company beginning on March 3. Madame Gardie joined them to dance leading roles, and John Durang somewhat overshadowed by the French stars, began with small ones.

Francisquy's first production was *Pygmalion*, announced as "a lyric scene of the celebrated J. J. Rousseau, with musical interludes by the same author." M. Val was Pygmalion, Madame Gardie was Galathea. On the same program were two new comic pantomimes, arranged by Francisquy: *The Milkmaid, or the Death of the Bear*, and *The*

Cooper, or the Guardian in love with his Pupil. In the latter, John Durang played the part of a Miller.

Soon the little ballet troupe became an integral part of the Old American Company. Now began the period which, so far as the ballet was concerned, was the most brilliant the young United States had ever seen. During the next four months the inventive Francisquy staged a seemingly endless procession of ballets and pantomimes. On March 26 he offered *The Whims of Galathea*, a sequel to the successful *Pygmalion*. There was new scenery painted by young Joseph Jefferson, and new music, probably composed by James Hewitt. Francisquy took the role of Damon, Jefferson was Dorilas, Durang was Alexis, Mrs. Durang was Philida, and Madame Gardie played Galathea. A few days later *La Forêt Noire* was revived, followed on April 13 by a new ballet-pantomime called *The Milliners*. This may have been based on a burletta by T. Harpley, acted at Liverpool at 1790. Leading roles were sustained by Francisquy and Madame Gardie, while Durang joined Jefferson, Prigmore, and Hallam Jr. as one of four Officers.

On April 18 Benjamin Carr's opera *The Archers*, with a libretto by William Dunlap based on the legend of William Tell, was given for the first time. Dunlap says that Carr's music was "pleasing and well got up," but he gives no details about the incidental dances. Madame Gardie and Madame Val were cast as "Maidens of Uri," so we may safely assume that they preceded Marie Taglioni by thirty-three years in dancing the Swiss Tyrolienne, which the great ballerina introduced in Rossini's *William Tell* at the Paris Opera in 1829. Durang, Des Moulins and several other dancers were in the cast, so the incidental ballets must have been rather elaborate.

Another Francisquy ballet, *Rural Waggish Tricks, or the Enraged Musicians*, was given at Madame Val's benefit performance on April 21. A special feature was a new "Country Dance," *Yankee Doodle!* Durang, Dubois, Francisquy, Mrs. Durang, Madame Val and

NEW-YORK, December 26, 1796.

THEATRE.

By the Old AMERICAN COMPANY.

On Monday Evening, the 29th of December, will be presented,
A COMEDY, called, The

DRAMATIST:

Or, *STOP HIM WHO CAN.*

<p>Vapid, (and the Epilogue) Lord Scratch Nevill, Ennuï, Willoughby, And, Florville, Louisa, Lady Waitfort, Letty, And, Marianna,</p>	<p>Mr. HODGKINSON, Ms. MARRIOTT, Mr. MARTIN, Mr. KING, Mr. ASHTON, Mr. DURANG, Mr. HALLAM, jun. Mrs. MARRIOTT, Mrs. HAMILTON, Mrs. MILLER, Mrs. HALLAM.</p>
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End of Act 4. the favourite Song of, "Heaving the Load," by Mr. NELSON.

End of the Play a HORNPIPE, by Mr. DURANG.

To which will be added, a NEW SERIOUS PANTOMIME, (never performed here) called,

SOPHIA OF BRABANT:

Or, The *FALSE FRIEND.*

<p>Don Golez, (the False Friend) Horatio, (Son of Don Carlos) Pedro, Francisco, Pescador, Rufusian, Don Carlos, And, Zebina, Domestics and Villagers, And, Sophia,</p>	<p>Mr. HODGKINSON, Miss HARDING, Mr. DURANG, Messrs. Carr, Nelson, Martin, Ashton, King, &c. Messrs. Hallam, jun. Richards, Wells, Martin, &c. Messrs. Lee, Miller, Leonard, McKnight, &c. Mr. MARRIOTT, Mrs. SOLOMONS, Mrs. Hamble, Mrs. Telfer, Mrs. Durang, Mrs. King, Miss Cleaver, Mrs. Miller, &c. &c. (her first Appearance) Madame GARDIE.</p>
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BOX 8s. PIT 6s. GALLERY 4s.

PLACES in the BOXES may be taken of Mr. Faulstich at the Box Office, from 10 o'clock till 10 o'clock on the Day of Performance. From 10 o'clock till 10 o'clock, P. M. where the Boxes may be had, and at Mrs. Gule's Bookstore, at the Bible in Bow-Street.

The Door will be opened a Quarter after Five, and the Curtain drawn up precisely a Quarter after Six o'clock.

* * * Ladies and Gentlemen will please to find their Seats at 5 o'clock to be ready.

Vital Republica.

Harvard Theatre Collection.

Madame Gardie all had prominent roles. On May 3, for the benefit of his lovely premiere danseuse, the indefatigable Francisquy presented a "Grand Historic and Military Pantomime, *The American Heroine*," with Madame Gardie in the title role. Indian dances were a feature of this spectacle, in which Durang and most of the other male dancers were cast as Savages. On May 18 there was still another new ballet, *The Old Man Groven Young*, with the choreographer in the title role, Durang as Colas, Madame Gardie as Laurette and Master Stockwell as Cupid. The final pantomimic production of this prolific season was *The Independance of America, or the Ever Memorable 4th of July, 1776*. It began with an allegorical prologue, included a pastoral dance, and ended with the

Declaration of Independence. Madame Gardie must have made a lovely figure as America. Evidently she had overcome her repugnance to patriotic demonstrations, for she appeared in many of them in this country. Durang took a small part, the First Citizen, Francisquy had the character role of an Old Woman, Mr. Tyler, as the General, was made up to resemble George Washington, and other characters were Britannia, the Goddess of Liberty, and the President.

For the rest of his career, whenever he had a chance at production, John Durang was to draw on these ballets and spectacular pantomimes of Francisquy's. The French choreographer seems to have taken a genuine interest in the American dancer, and in the divertissements given between the acts on play nights, they frequently appeared together. On March 30, for example, they danced a Spanish Fandango with Mmes. Val and Gardie. This must have been one of the earliest presentations of the Spanish dance in this country.

At the close of this brilliant season the ballet contingent of the Old American Company went alone to Newport, Rhode Island, while the actors began a summer season at Hartford. The principal dancers were Francisquy, Val, Dubois, Durang and Madame Gardie, and the repertoire included such established favorites as *Robinson Crusoe*, *Harlequin's Ramble*, *The Wapping Landlady*, and *The Bird Catcher*, with Francisquy's new ballets, *The Cooper* and *The Milliners* as added attractions. In spite of all this, the Newport season was a disastrous failure. Sonneck says that "From a pitiful appeal to the public it would appear that John Durang and his associates barely escaped starvation."* As the result of this unfortunate excursion, the fine ballet of the Old American Company was completely broken up. Poor Madame Gardie was evidently left without employment — she did not dance again in New York until shortly before her death — and John Durang returned to Philadelphia to join the circus troupe at Ricketts' Amphitheatre.

John B. Ricketts, a Scotchman, had arrived in Philadelphia in 1792 and opened a circus and riding school. His establishment was just across the street from the new Chestnut St. Theatre, under the management of Wignell and Reinagle. Ricketts soon began to compete with the larger theatre in the production of pantomimes and farces. Wignell, furious at what he considered an invasion of his territory, announced for December 25, 1795, an entertainment of leaping, balancing and acrobatics, called *T'Other Side of the Gutter*. Nevertheless Ricketts persevered in his new policy, and in the autumn of 1796 engaged John Durang to direct the pantomimes.

Durang's first production, given with the circus on October 19, 1796, was a comic ballet called *The Country Frolic, or the Merry Haymakers*. Mrs. Durang participated, but the rest of his cast, composed of regular circus performers, was probably none too expert in the art of pantomime. At any rate, the ballet was given only once. Other new productions of the season, probably directed by Durang, included the pantomimes *Mirth's Medley* and *The Valiant Soldier*, and the comic ballet *The Two Huntsmen*.

Ricketts, however, was in search of an outstanding novelty. Early in November he engaged James Byrne, former ballet master at Sadler's Wells and Covent Garden in London, to produce a "Grand Serious Pantomime" called *The Death of Captain Cook*. Byrne and his wife had just arrived from England, and were awaiting their debut at the Chestnut, across the street. *The Death of Captain Cook*, given on November 7, had a sensational success and was given five successive times. Durang had two roles, Perea, and a Priest. From a program in the collection of the Museum of the City of New York, we learn that this production (brought to New York in the following year) had

original music and accompaniments by
Mons. Rochefort

NEW SCENERY, DRESSES & DECORATIONS

Descriptive of the Manners and Customs of
the Natives of Owyhee in the Pacific Ocean.
With the characteristic dances and processions,

* O. G. Sonneck: *Early Opera in America*, p. 158.

and the Marriage Ceremonies (peculiar to that country) of

PERREA and EMAI

To Conclude with the Assassination of
Captain Cook.

On December 3, Byrne produced his greatest London success, *Oscar and Malvina*, at Ricketts' Amphitheatre. The cast is not known, but Durang, as Ricketts' leading dancer, probably had the role of Oscar. This ballet was frequently revived by other companies, but its first production was somewhat shadowed by the disastrous debut of the Byrnes at the Chestnut St. Theatre, four days later. For the occasion, Byrne had produced *Dermot and Kathleen*, a ballet adapted from the opera *The Poor Soldier*. The Philadelphia audience thought that Mrs. Byrne's costume was inadequate, and hissed her off the stage. At the next performance she wore pantalettes down to the ankle, but it was too late. She was never successful in this country. Byrne remained in the United States until 1800, producing many ballets, but his path did not again cross that of John Durang.

After the Byrne disaster, Ricketts turned from ballet production for a time. One new pantomime, *The Magic Feast*, was given January 14, 1797. This may have been the same as *The Magic Tree, or Neptune's Favor*, which Durang staged for Ricketts three months later in New York. On February 7, for his benefit performance, Durang presented Francisquy's popular *Independence of America*. A week later another choreographer, M. Spinacuta, trespassed on Durang's territory, producing the pantomime of *The Magic Fight, or The Little Cripple Devil*. Spinacuta was a rope dancer and acrobat, who had been associated with Placide for many seasons.

In the spring Ricketts' company went to New York, where they appeared in a magnificent new Amphitheatre on Greenwich Street. Here Durang produced several new ballets: *The Peasant of the Alps*, *The Country Wake, or the Frolicsome Crew* (with a Hornpipe by Durang, Ricketts, and Frank-

lin), and *The Magic Tree*, mentioned above. He also revived Francisquy's *The Milliners* and Byrne's *Oscar and Malvina*. In the circus performances, Durang regularly appeared as the Clown.

On June 8, 1797, Durang presented a pantomimic ballet called *The Harvest Home, or Rustic Merriment*. The title suggests a similarity to William Francis's *Rural Merriment*, given at the Chestnut St. Theatre two years earlier. Another pantomime, *The Humours of Bartholemew Fair*, was produced for Mrs. Durang's benefit on July 3. An advertisement of this performance, now in the Harvard Theatre Collection, shows that the Durangs lived at No. 18 Thames Street.

On July 18 John Durang presented a really original pantomime, with a good lusty title: *The Western Exhibition, or The Whiskey Boys' Liberty Pole*. It is too bad that no description of this intriguing production has survived. Soon after, Ricketts' Circus embarked on a tour which took them all the way to Canada. In August they were appearing in Albany, where Durang was advertised as "Clown to the Horsemanship," and announced with Ricketts in an exhibition of "Still Vaulting, or a Trial of skill, over a single Horse." This Albany program also included *The Taylor's Disaster, or Johnny Gilpin's Journey to Brentford*, by Mr. Durang. This may have been a pantomime, but more probably it was just a comic song. He sang more often, and danced less, in his later years.

Durang remained with Ricketts' Circus until its Philadelphia headquarters was destroyed by fire on December 17, 1799. He participated in several interesting productions during these years. In 1798 he and Spinacuta painted the scenery for a pantomime called *The Battle of Trenton*. They introduced a realistic snow-storm, with the snow falling on the American Army marching by night to the British camp. This novel effect was much admired. On January 23, 1799, Durang made his debut as an author, with the sketch *The Death of Miss McCrea*, which he had written in conjunction with John B. Rowson.

On February 17, 1799, Durang produced another pantomime with a marvellous title, *The Battle of the Kegs*. This was billed as "The memorable Historical Representation. With all the Scenery of the Delaware, Front-Street, wharves, flat-men, corders, carters, citizens, &c." This was certainly a far cry from the fanciful British harlequinades. Durang seems to have been a real pioneer in the introduction of spectacles based on American themes.

On the night of the burning of Ricketts' Circus, Durang had been announced to play *Don Juan* in the popular pantomime based on Gluck's opera. The playbill announced that "The last scene represented the infernal regions, with a view of the mouth of hell, Don Juan being reduced by his wickedness to the dreadful necessity of leaping headlong into the gaping gulf in a shower of fire amongst the furies, who receive him on the points of their burning spears, and hurl him into the bottomless pit."

At that time there was a strong theatrical superstition that it was bad luck to play *Don Juan*, and although the fire began before the start of the pantomime, the audience blamed it on the wicked Don.

The destruction of his theatre ruined Ricketts, and Durang was thrown on his own resources. That summer, 1800, he joined forces with John B. Rowson and presented a two-months season at the old Southwark Theatre. This was his first venture as an impresario. The entertainment was named *The Thespian Panorama*, which irritated a group of amateur actors who called themselves *The Thespian Society*. They complained in the newspapers, Durang and Rowson replied, and the resultant publicity probably did the little venture much more good than harm. The programs consisted of short comedies, pantomimes, tight-rope dancing, and, we suspect, a good many Hornpipes.

Soon after, Durang became a member of the stock company of the Chestnut St. Theatre. There he remained until the end of his career. His family was growing rapidly

(he already had three sons, even if little Frederick was dead) and he wished to make a permanent home for them. Each year the company played a brief autumn season in Baltimore, but the winter was spent comfortably in Philadelphia. The Durang family lived at 216 Cedar Street, which was then on the edge of town. Durang and his wife acted small roles in the plays, and continued to appear in the pantomimes and ballets, which were under the direction of William Francis.

Francis was a real character. His real name was Francis Mentges, and he was a Dutchman. He had made his first appearance in Philadelphia in 1772, when he was announced as "from the theatre in Amsterdam." Under his own name, he served as a Colonel in the Revolutionary Army, and when General Washington came to the Constitutional Convention in Philadelphia in 1787, Francis was one of those who met him and escorted him into the city. Going to England that same year, he resumed his profession as a dancer, appearing in Manchester, Dublin and Liverpool. When Wignell went to England in 1793 to find people for the new Chestnut St. Theatre, he engaged Francis and his wife at the joint salary of \$40 a week — an extremely good figure for those days, when actors often received only \$5 a week, and dancers less. Francis was a talented choreographer, specializing in rustic and comic ballets. Several of his productions have already been mentioned. In his later years he was a well-known comedian.

Francis taught dancing in Philadelphia for many years. His classes featured the French Cotillion, the Minuet, and the English country dance. "On his ball nights," writes Charles Durang, "the pupils and visitors were delighted to see Mr. Francis standing at the head of the ballroom, as master of ceremonies, ushering all to places with his airy and amusing suavity. In dress, he was neatness personified. Fashionably cut small-clothes, white silk stockings, neatly made shining pumps, set off a well-made leg. His head was carefully dressed and powdered, and his face wreathed with smiles. . ."

John Durang soon became Francis's associate in teaching, and also in staging the ballets at the Chestnut St. Theatre. Gradually the young members of the Durang family were taken into the company. In those days, according to Charles Durang, "the ballet corps was not composed of supernumeraries — they were not resorted to, even to fill up a procession. . . The very minor business, and the ballet performances, were executed, principally, by the sons and daughters of the performers, who had received a suitable education in all of these requirements. . . The children, thus employed, were taught dancing and music, and the accomplishments necessary to a theatrical education, and which would make them, afterwards, acceptable in society. The theatre was then a school; they were, of course, placed out of the theatre, under masters, to learn other branches of education. . ."

Charles and Ferdinand Durang made their debuts together, in 1803, at the ages of nine and seven respectively, in a "pigmy pantomime" arranged by Francis, and titled *Harlequin Prisoner, or the Genii of the Rocks*. It may be recalled that the first pantomime in which John Durang appeared in New York, in 1785, was called *The Genii of the Rock*. Possibly this was an arrangement of the same harlequinade. Ferdinand was Pantaloon, and Charles was Harlequin, "with original attitudes and a leap."

Augustus Durang, born in Philadelphia in 1800, made his New York debut at the Park Theatre, as Tom Thumb, when he was just six years old. At the first Philadelphia performance of James Byrne's London pantomime, *Cinderella* (restaged by William Francis at the Chestnut in January 1806), Charles, Ferdinand and Augustus were all Cupids. As a child Augustus specialized in comic songs, but as soon as he was old enough he gave up the stage to become a sailor. He was lost at sea soon after.

John Durang had at least three daughters, Charlotte, born in Philadelphia in 1803, Julia Catherine, born in Baltimore in 1805, and a mysterious "Miss K. Durang," who may have died in childhood. Some early playbills list

all three of the little girls, so we know that the "K" did not stand for a variation of Catherine or Charlotte. There was also a "Miss M. Durang" who danced a double Hornpipe with John at the Chestnut St. Theatre on May 22, 1816. This was probably the daughter Mary Anne, mentioned in John Durang's will.

All these children were trained as dancers, and began appearing in public quite regularly when they were little more than babies. By the time Julia and Charlotte made their New York debuts, at the ages of sixteen and eighteen respectively, they were real veterans. They first appeared at the Park Theatre on January 7, 1821, as Red Riding Hood and Lubin in the ballet *Little Red Riding Hood*.

In the summer of 1807 John Durang's former employer, Lewis Hallam, gave him the use of the old Southwark Theatre rent free. The season opened on July 22, with a performance of Francisquy's *Independence of America*, which now included a Hornpipe by Ferdinand Durang and a song, "Giles Scroggins' Ghost," by seven-year-old Augustus. During the summer John Durang revived Placide's *The Two Philosophers*, Francis's *Caledonian Frolic*, Byrne's *The Death of Captain Cook*, and his own *Peasant of the Alps*. On July 30 he presented "a curious Pantomimical Dance, called the *Lilliputian Frolic*," in which the little Durangs must have been delightful. A Scotch ballet called *Auld Robin Grey* included a Highland Fling, a Strathespey, a Pas Seul and a Garland Dance.

During this season many plays were presented, and John Durang, who had so often played tiny parts, at last had a chance at the leading roles. The climax of his career as an actor came on August 3, when he played Petruchio in *The Taming of the Shrew*. Ten days later Lewis Hallam and his wife joined the company as guest stars, appearing intermittently until the season closed in October. These were Hallam's last appearances on the stage. He died in the following year.

Charles Durang tells us that on his benefit night, that summer of 1807, John Durang

"flew from the gallery to the stage, bringing in \$350." Unfortunately he does not reveal just how this feat was accomplished. Perhaps he walked a tight rope. At any rate, it was worth while, for the usual nightly returns were about \$75.

Almost every summer, John Durang would take his family and a few assisting artists on a brief tour of the neighboring towns. They often appeared in Lancaster, Harrisburg and York, and in 1809 went as far afield as lower Canada. Their varied programs consisted of bits of plays, farces, pantomimes and ballets. It was during one of these tours that Mrs. John Durang died, in Harrisburg, on September 12, 1812.

During the War of 1812 John Durang and two of his sons, Charles and Ferdinand, served in the Pennsylvania Militia. Charles was one of the little garrison of the six-gun battery at North Point, Baltimore, during the battle which inspired Francis Scott Key to write "The Star-Spangled Banner." It was Ferdinand Durang who first fitted the words of our national anthem to its present tune, an old English drinking song called "Anacreon in Heaven." He was also the first to sing it in public, at the Holiday St. Theatre, Baltimore, while Charles led the chorus.

John Durang retired from the stage in 1819. During his last years he appeared much more often as an actor, than as a dancer. Nevertheless, on April 12, 1819, just before he retired, he played the role of Guzman in a "Spanish Ballet" called *Love Among the Roses*.

For the last three years of his life, Durang was confined to his house by asthma. His daughters Julia and Charlotte supported him, for by that time they were popular dancers. John Durang died in 1822. Charlotte did not survive him for many years. She danced at the Park Theatre, New York, until 1824, and then returned to Philadelphia to die of tuberculosis at the age of 21.

Julia Durang won a modest success as an actress. About 1824 she married Francis R. Godey, brother of the editor of "Godey's

Ladies' Book." He must have been connected with the theatre in a technical capacity. Although there is no mention of him as a performer, he and his wife were engaged at the Lafayette Theatre, New York, for the season of 1825, at a joint salary of twenty-five dollars—about seven dollars a week! Charles Durang says of his sister: "She was of a very petite figure, with a lively, pleasing, joyous countenance, that imparted a merry vivaciousness to her dramatic impersonations. . . . It was, however, upon her talent as a dancer that she rested her pretensions rather than upon her skill as an actress. . . . As a ballet performer Miss Durang was popular for many seasons, as a neat, modest and pleasing artist. . . ." After the death of Godey in 1836, Julia married James J. Wallace. She died in Philadelphia in February, 1849.

Ferdinand Durang had a brief but colorful career as an actor. He had been dancing and playing small roles for years, and was more or less taken for granted at the Chestnut St. Theatre when, in 1816, he had a quarrel with the managers, Warren and Wood, over a fine which he felt had been unjustly imposed. An English equestrian named West had recently opened a circus at the nearby Olympic Theatre, and was preparing an elaborate spectacle called *Timour the Tartar*. Ferdinand Durang walked out of the Chestnut, applied for the leading role in *Timour*, got it, and had a sensational success. In this part he had to perform all sorts of acrobatic equestrian feats, for which his dance training had prepared him well. "Ramparts were scaled by the horses, breaches were dashed into, and a great variety of new business was introduced," Durang records. "The horses were taught to imitate the agonies of death and they did so in a manner which was astonishing." The "Equestrian Melodrama" played for 27 nights, between November 28, 1816, and January 4, 1817, and the receipts reached over eight hundred dollars a night.

In 1824 Ferdinand Durang went to New York, where he appeared as an actor at the Chatham and Bowery Theatres. He died there in 1831. His daughter, Rosalie (who used the name of *Durand*) carried the the-

atrical tradition of the family into the third generation. She made her debut in the title role of Balfe's *Bohemian Girl* at the Broadway Theatre, New York, in 1855. Her career was a short one, and she died in 1866.

Charles Durang had the most varied and interesting life of all John's children. He was a member of Alexander Placide's company in Richmond, Virginia, when on December 26, 1811, the theatre was burned to the ground, with terrible loss of life. He escaped unhurt, and made his New York debut two months later, on February 17, 1812, at the Park Theatre, in a pantomime called *The Genii* (the same *Genii of the Rock*, perhaps), with a Hornpipe between the acts. He was then only seventeen.

Charles Durang married a young English dancer and actress, Mary White, who had made her debut at the Chestnut St. Theatre on September 18, 1811. He danced with her at Vauxhall Garden, Philadelphia, in the summer of 1819. Later she made a debut as an actress at the Anthony St. Theatre, New York.

Charles Durang was a member of the fine ballet company at the Bowery Theatre, New York, in 1827. The ballet master was M. Labasse, and other soloists were M. and Mme. Achille, and Mme. Hutin, pioneers in introducing the "French style of dancing" (which probably meant dancing on the pointes and supported adagio, hitherto unknown in this country). The star was thirteen-year-old Mlle. Celeste, who later enjoyed such a brilliant career as a ballerina, mime, actress and manager.

Charles Durang was at various times an actor, ballet-master, stage manager, author

and critic. For many years he was prompter at the Chestnut St. Theatre. After his retirement from the stage, he taught dancing in Philadelphia, assisted by his daughter Caroline. Charles Durang had ten children, of whom the most talented was Edwin Forrest Durang, a well-known architect, who designed theatres at Harrisburg, Reading and York. F. Ferdinand Durang Jr., the grandson of Edwin F. Durang and the great-great-grandson of John Durang, is at present serving in Ireland with the armed forces of the United States.

Charles Durang published several guides to dancing, which show that he was thoroughly familiar with the fundamentals of the classic ballet and the writings of Noverre and Blasis, as well as with the social dances of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. He saw the full pageant of the theatrical dance as it changed from the simple English style popular in his childhood, through the exquisite art of Fanny Elssler, who danced in Philadelphia in the 'forties, to the dry, technical acrobatics of the Italian ballerinas who held the stage after the production of *The Black Crook* in 1866. Charles Durang died in Philadelphia on February 15, 1870, at the age of seventy-six.

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